



Info@starklawlibrary.org

Stark County Law Library Association

September 2002

**The email
address,
info@starklaw
library.org
really works!
TRY IT!!**

BEGINNERS

What is a Spreadsheet?

And Why Should I Learn How To Use One?

Whatis.com describes a spreadsheet as “a computer application program that simulates a physical spreadsheet by capturing, displaying, and manipulating data arranged in rows and columns. The spreadsheet is one of the most popular uses of the personal computer.”¹ Lotus 1-2-3 and Microsoft Excel are the most commonly used spreadsheet applications.

Now that you have some idea of what a spreadsheet is, below you will find four ways you can use spreadsheets in your practice.

Joe Hartley of Hartley & Hartley in Santa Monica considers spreadsheets as “one of the best tools a lawyer has for analysis and presentation.”² His firm uses spreadsheets for:

- basic calculations
- tracking damages
- visualizing information
- and as demonstrative evidence

Jeffrey Lisson of Winston-Salem uses **basic calculations** in his spreadsheets to track medical bills, liens and case costs. He lists four benefits of this system:

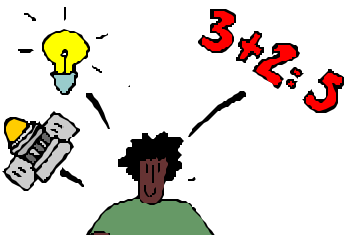
- assures we keep an accurate total of medical bills
- assures liens are paid, preventing any attorney liability
- lets counsel see at a glance how much we have spent on a case
- assures that we can tell the client exactly how much money they will net from a given settlement at mediation.³

If you use Word Perfect, you can download his spreadsheet at <http://www.lissonlaw.com/articles-opinions.html>.

Mr. Hartley's examples of tracking economic damages and visualizing information were so well written, I couldn't say it better!

There's nothing better than a spreadsheet for **tracking economic damages** in a case. If you've got a pretty good idea of how the damages are going to come out, you can enter them in sub-groups and provide subtotals. Best of all -- and this is the coolest part of a spreadsheet -- you can calculate the present value of your clients' damages that are out-of-pocket expenses. How? With the date and the amount, you can have a third column which will calculate the interest which has accrued through the present date... In California, plaintiffs are entitled to 10% simple interest,

Continued on page 2



“If a picture is worth a thousand words, a well-designed spreadsheet is worth at least 100,000.”

BEGINNER

Spreadsheets (Continued)

which adds up fast. Use the spreadsheet to track and total it, and you'll be surprised how quickly it adds up. And, best of all, you NEVER have to recalculate the interest because the spreadsheet will do it for you, based on the computer's system date. Defendants should do similar calculations to avoid being sandbagged.⁴

It's often useful to **visualize the progress of cases** by seeing who has responded to discovery, whose deposition has been taken, and so forth. So we create an alphabetical list of the parties who, say, are being deposed, and next to them place the date of their deposition. If it goes over into another day, we place that in the next column, and so forth. For the depositions that have been completed, we color the background of the cell red. For those that haven't been taken, we color the background gray, and for those that are ongoing, green. You now have a grid where you can track your progress at completing discovery. The chart

should go from all gray, to green and red, and should ultimately be all red. You can tell your progress at a glance, and even get the days the depositions were taken without having to fumble through the files. Note that there's no calculation involved (though you could do so if you wanted), and you now have an effective management tool.⁵

As for **demonstrative evidence**, I will again quote Hartley: “Any lawyer with a case involving numbers must use a spreadsheet to devise graphical aides. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a well-designed spreadsheet is worth at least 100,000.”⁶

I hope we have whetted your appetite and you are ready for the series of lessons on spreadsheets that are coming to this space beginning next month!

INTERMEDIATE

Backup Your PDA



Last month's article on creating backups for your computer's information did not mention your PDA, be it a Palm Pilot, Visor, Sony, or Pocket PC. You DO need to make a habit of backing up that data also. The good news is that this can be very simple! Because each time you sync your PDA, whether you use the Palm Desktop, Outlook, or a legal-specific case management program for your PIM functions (calendar, contacts, tasks and memos), you are in effect backing up your data from your PDA. In addition, add-on

programs such as expense managers synchronize the data entered on the PDA to a directory on your PC.

To rebuild a PDA, do a hotsync. To test a backup, all you have to do is this: perform a hotsync, and then a hard reset on your Palm-OS device, which wipes the PDA clean of all data and any add-on programs that you have installed. Then perform another hotsync. Everything is restored to the condition your PDA was in after the last hotsync you performed.

Continued on page 3

INTERMEDIATE

Backup Your PDA (Continued)

you can always spend some money on Backup Buddy <<http://www.backupbuddy.com>>, a popular add-on program for backups. If you don't sync often with your PC because of extended travels periods or the like, there are also hardware solutions. The new BackupBuddy VFS allows you to backup your data and apps to a SD (secure digital) card or Sony memory stick if your PDA is equipped for these forms of

removable media. Handspring Visors can be equipped with a backup spring-board module <<http://www.handspring.com/products/Category.jhtml?id=170016>>, or newer models of Palm PDA have their own expansion cards <<https://store.palm.com/Catalog/expansioncards.asp>>.

BE SURE TO HAVE A GOOD
ANTIVIRUS PROGRAM
INSTALLED ON YOUR PDA!! ⁷

ADVANCED

What To Use When

Special points of interest:

- Use vector images for medical drawings, cartoon-like images and CAD technical drawings.
- Use the GIF format for small images, like icons and buttons, line art, or grayscale (black and white) images.
- Use JPEG for scanned images and photographs, large images or images with a lot of detail.

Last month you learned what Vector and Bitmap graphics are. This month you will discover their advantages and disadvantages and some general guidelines for when to use each.

Vectors:

- + File sizes tend to be small
- + Scaleable without resolution loss
- + Readily edited
- Not very good for photo-realistic images
- Files tend to be application specific

Bitmap:

- + Provides a high degree of photo-realism
- + Often faster display/redraw than vector images
- + Lots of common file formats
- Lots of common file formats
- Large file sizes
- Not readily scaleable
- May be difficult to edit ⁸


Notice that “lots of common file formats” is an advantage because the more common formats work with

almost all graphic programs especially BMP; PCX; GIF; JPEG; TGA; PNG; PCD. It can be a disadvantage when you may find a great graphic that is in a format that can be difficult to work with, ie. TIFF; PICT; EPS; CGM; DXF; WMF. A list of the most common extensions for both vector and raster (bitmap) graphics is at: <<http://graphicssoft.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/9644/vector.html%23Vector>>.

As a “rule of thumb,” use vector images for medical drawings, cartoon-like images and CAD technical drawings. For everything else, use bitmaps. Because GIF and JPEG are the most prevalent bitmap image formats, as a general rule, use the GIF format for small images, like icons and buttons, line art, or grayscale (black and white) images, and use JPEG for scanned images and photographs, large images or images with a lot of detail. ⁹

Continued on page 4

FOOTNOTES

¹ “Spreadsheet.” searchWin2000.com. 1999 - 2002, TechTarget.  14 August 2002 <<http://searchwin2000.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid1gci532933,00.html>>

^{2,4,5 & 6} Posting of Joseph Hartley, jmh@hartley.com. The Many Uses of Spreadsheets in a Law Firm. to the TechnoLawyer Topical Compilation. To subscribe <<http://www.technolawyer.com/member/index.asp>> (23 July 2002) (copy on file with author).

³ Posting of Jeffrey Lisson, jlisson@lissonlaw.com. The Many Uses of Spreadsheets in a Law Firm. to the TechnoLawyer Topical Compilation. To subscribe <<http://www.technolawyer.com/>

[member/index.asp](http://www.technolawyer.com/member/index.asp)> (23 July 2002) (copy on file with author).

⁷ Posting of Kelly Dunn, keely.dunn@legaltech.ca. Palm Backup & Security Tips. to the TechnoLawyer Topical Compilation. To subscribe <<http://www.technolawyer.com/member/index.asp>> (23 July 2002) (copy on file with author).

⁸ “DIMP: Image File Formats.” TASI. 2002 TASI. 15 August 2002. <<http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/using/file.html>>

⁹ Burns, Joe. “Image Formats on the Web.” HTML Goodies. 2002 INT Media Group, Incorporated 15 August 2002. <http://www.htmlgoodies.com/tutors/image_formats.html>

By Nancy Stinson, MLS
nancy@starklawlibrary.org